Public Meeting
Boston to Montreal High Speed Rail Feasibility and Planning Study
November 12, 2002
Concord, New Hampshire

Seventy people attended the public meeting in Concord, New Hampshire on November 12, 2002. Below is a summary of questions and comments.

Q. It looks like your study shows there is a potential market for the high speed rail but you don't quite have the numbers?

A. *Yes, that is correct.*

Q. Your numbers show the bulk of the riders do not travel the whole distance between Boston and Montreal, where are the bulk of the partial trips made?

A. *A large number of people travel from Burlington, VT to points south in Vermont and New Hampshire. We learned that a low percentage of travel (about 5%) between the two cities is for business. The opportunity here would be to maximize the connection of the high speed service to recreational uses.*

Q. If passenger service is restored between Concord and Boston, did you envision high speed rail passengers would transfer to a commuter line?

A. *High speed rail is not predicted to interface substantially with commuter lines because commuter rail is cheaper.*

Q. Your ridership model uses a range of costs to passengers from 20 – 36 cents/mile. Is 20 cents realistic?

A. *We believe it is realistic because the increase in ridership at the lower price brings in more revenue than the higher prices.*

Q. How does the 20 cents/mile price compare to the Downeaster?

A. *The Downeaster costs 16 – 18 cents/mile.*

Q. Did you use current costs (2002) assumptions, even though the service won't be operational until 2025?

A. *The study uses 2002 costs for all calculations.*

Q. Did the study consider the aging factor, our demographics will be shifting to a proportionately older population by the year 2025, and perhaps less likely to drive?

A. *No. The study assumed a population with existing ages.*

Q. Why did the study use 12 cents/mile as the cost of automobile travel? Isn't that a little low?

A. *When most people decide how much it costs to travel by car, they only count the cost of gas and tolls; they don't calculate the indirect costs of car maintenance, insurance and purchase. Twelve cents a mile is a standard amount used in travel studies.*

Q. If multiple people travel together in a car, then the price of the trip per person will make the trip less than 12 cents/mile, did the study consider many automobiles will carry more than one passenger?

A. *The study based the 12 cents/mile on one person traveling per car. Generally, cars traveling on weekdays in the corridor have 1.2 passengers, on weekends 1.6 passengers.*

Q. Would you consider sharing the rail line with freight as a possible source of revenue?

A. *Yes.*

Q. Were Canadians included in the focus groups?

A. *Yes.*

Q. Amtrak has been known for cost overruns, what will make this high speed rail system more profitable?

A. *There have been no conclusions about who would operate high speed rail service between Boston and Montreal. The national debate about the future of rail in this country will effect how the future of this service plays out.*

Q. Will the high speed rail service take business away from existing rail servicing Vermont, Massachusetts and New York?

A. *No. The more opportunity there is for people to take rail, the better it is for everyone.*

Q. Do you envision a service that pays for itself?

A. *There isn't enough information from Phase I of the study to make a determination of whether the service could be self-sustaining.*

Q. How many stops were used in the ridership model?

A. *Eight stops.*

Q. Did the model consider running more than four trains a day? How about eight?

A. *The study concluded four trains were the minimum number, more than that the cost of operations went up. Less than four train a day substantially reduced ridership. The study also considered there was a lack of capacity at Boston and Montreal terminals to accommodate more than four trains.*

Q. How frequent is the Montrealer?

A. *It runs once a day.*

Q. Is there any additional product for Phase I?

A. *A final report is being prepared and will be available in December. An executive summary will be posted on the website.*

Additional Comments by Members of the Public:

- *When looking at subsidies for high speed rail, the government should apply the same subsidy for all modes of travel – airline, automobile, etc.*
- *This should not be viewed as a stand alone project but should be evaluated in the context of its by-products. Will it help tourism, the major industry of New England? Will through freight service attract business, especially in New Hampshire?*
- *$405 million is needed to widen I-93 and it won't provide enough capacity.*